

State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY



COMMISSION ON CHILDREN

CONNECTICUT COMMISSION ON CHILDREN
Minutes of Meeting

Legislative Office Building, Room 1-D
Hartford, Connecticut

Tuesday, March 14, 2006
9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Voting members present: George Coleman, James P. Cordier, Alison Hilding, Josh Piteo, Laura Lee Simon and Leslie Wolfgang.

Ex officio members (or designees) present: Department of Correction (Patrick Hynes), Department of Mental Retardation (Commissioner Peter O'Meara) and Department of Social Services (Sylvia Gafford-Alexander).

Members absent: Judith A. Busch, Representative Andrew M. Fleischmann, Office of Policy and Management (Anne Foley), Mary Fox, Dr. Alex Geertsma, Department of Public Health (Norma Gyle), Senator Mary Ann Handley, Department of Children and Families (Josh Howroyd), Representative Michael Lawlor, Judge Michael Mack, Senator Christopher Murphy, Attorney General (Susan Pearlman), Mary Grace Reed and John Yrchik.

Guests: Dr. Kyle Pruett, Dr. Eddie Davis, Rev. Shelley D.B. Copeland, Charisse Hutton, Dr. Alice Pritchard, Dr. Tim Black, Eddie Cajigas, Doug Edwards and Pat Wilson-Coker.

Commission staff present: Elaine Zimmerman, Thomas Brooks, Elizabeth Brown, Patricia Estill, Kevin Flood, Dawn Homer-Bouthiette, Rachel Levy and Edie Luciano.

Handouts: Agenda; minutes for the September 13, 2005, and November 15, 2005 meetings; and the Fatherhood Forum packet, including biographies of Dr. Kyle Pruett and discussion panelists, fact sheets on the John S. Martinez Fatherhood Initiative and the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative, the 2006 Fatherhood Directory, Executive Summary from the Final Evaluation Report on the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative, and National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) handouts entitled, "10 Things States Can Do to Help Low-income Fathers" and "What Policymakers Need to Know and What They Can Do."

Meeting convened

Chair James Cordier called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. Mr. Cordier announced that the rest of the meeting would be devoted to a presentation and panel discussion on fatherhood, co-sponsored by the state Department of Social Services (DSS). He then invited state Rep. Marie Kirkley-Bey to the podium.

Rep. Kirkley-Bey introduced the keynote speaker of the event, Dr. Kyle Pruett, clinical professor of child psychiatry and director of medical studies at the Yale Child Study Center, Yale University School of Medicine.

Dr. Pruett's topic was, "Fatherneed: The Important Role Fathers Play in the Lives of their Children." Among his points:

- Biological studies of infants show that they seek comfort from mothers but crave interaction with their fathers.
- Whereas mothers tend to reassure toddlers in frustrating and fearful situations, fathers encourage them to tolerate frustration for a bit longer, thus helping them to develop coping skills.
- Studies show that children who are actively involved with their fathers from birth through adolescence develop more emotional balance, stronger curiosity, and greater self-assurance.
- For mothers as well as fathers, "quality time" is a myth. Children don't distinguish between "quality" and "ordinary" time – all they know is whether time is being spent with them.

After Dr. Pruett's presentation, Commission Treasurer Josh Piteo introduced the discussion panel and turned the floor over to Commission Executive Director Elaine Zimmerman, who moderated the discussion. The panel included:

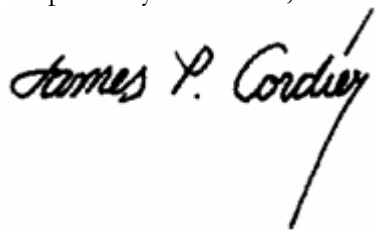
- Dr. Eddie Davis, Superintendent, Danbury Public Schools
- Dr. Patrick Hynes, Director of Offender Programs and Victim Services, Department of Correction
- Rev. Shelley D.B. Copeland, Executive Director, Capitol Region Conference of Churches
- Dr. Alice Pritchard, Executive Director, Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund
- Dr. Tim Black, Director, Center for Social Research, University of Hartford
- Eddie Cajigas, Program Director, Career Resources, Bridgeport
- Charisse Hutton, Director, Support Enforcement Services, Judicial Branch
- Doug Edwards, Director, Real Dads Forever, Manchester

Closing

State Commissioner of Social Services Pat Wilson-Coker made the closing remarks. She began by recalling the memory of the late state Rep. John S. Martinez and his role in focusing state government on the needs of fathers.

Mr. Cordier closed the meeting at 11:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James P. Cordier". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping vertical line extending downwards from the end of the name.

James P. Cordier
Chair